



Palos School District 118
East | West | South

All Students Reaching their Full Potential

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Busy Year at Palos 118

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



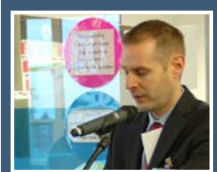
What a busy school year we have had at Palos 118! We started the school year with boundary changes for Palos East and Palos West and ended the school year with breaking ground on a new Early Learning Addition at Palos West. Mid-way through the year, our community graciously passed a bond referendum that will help finance improvements to our buildings over the next several years. In addition, just last month, Palos 118 was named a District of Distinction by District Administrator Magazine for its innovative eighth grade Capstone Program. That is a lot to accomplish in one school year and it would not have been possible without the hard work, dedication and support of our staff, students, parents, community and Board of Education.

As we continue to plan for the 2017-2018 school year, we embrace the importance of reflection. In our fast-paced world, taking the time to stop and reflect upon where we are and where we are headed is critical. Pausing to consider what we are doing well and what we can do better is all too important for growth of self and organization. Education has changed rapidly over the last decade and continues to evolve at an impressive and sometimes overwhelming pace thanks in large part to technology and ever changing expectations for learners. Next school year will be about taking a much-needed breath and tackling the difficult task of reflecting.

Taking the time to reflect does not mean standing still as an organization. We will complete our Early Learning Addition at Palos West by January 2018. Every day our teachers will continue to find new exciting ways to engage learners. Our Board of Education will be hard at work implementing policy and ensuring the taxpayers receive a great rate of return for their investment in our schools. We will continue to collaborate with local law enforcement and first responders to keep our kids safe. After listening to parent concerns regarding our mobile website limitations, we will launch our new website in August that will allow parents to navigate more easily from their smartphones or tablet devices. Next year will surely be another busy year but hopefully less hectic and more introspective.

Please continue to share your thoughts, suggestions and concerns with me by using our digital suggestion box. You can find our digital suggestion box at www.palos118.org.

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Palos 118 Superintendent of Schools



*Dr. Scarsella's
welcoming remarks
at the ELC
groundbreaking.*



EMBRACING OUR VISION:



The Palos 118 Board of Education's main goal is to support the district's vision of "Helping All Students Reach Their Full Potential."

This past year, with the help of a supportive administration team, parents, and community, we were able to pass a referendum that will bring a new Early Childhood Learning Addition to Palos West. Additionally, it will allow us to make capital improvements at all three schools. It is an accomplishment we can all be very proud of,

and I look forward to seeing the program grow and flourish in the future.

The Board of Education is committed to offering exceptional educational and extra-curricular activities for every student, while making it a great place for our talented staff to work and grow professionally. Our role is to serve as the policy making body for the district and work with our Superintendent, Dr Anthony Scarsella, who implements those policies. On behalf of the board, thank you for the opportunity to serve your school district.

MariJo Calacci
Palos 118 School Board President

Historic Referendum Passed by Voters

EARLY LEARNING ADDITION BECOMES REALITY



For the first time in nearly 50 years, voters approved a bond referendum in November 2016 that provide financing for an early learning building addition at Palos West and other building improvements at all three of our schools. The early learning addition will be completed in January 2018, with other projects being completed over the next four years thanks to the generous support of the communities we serve and their willingness to make this investment in our students' futures.

This achievement was made possible through the combined efforts of many. The Board of Education presented the request to the community, and the Pre-K and EC teachers spent countless hours in planning meetings and informational nights helping to design the Early



Watch Pre-K and ELL singing performance at groundbreaking.



Top left: Board members take part in a ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Palos 118 Early Learning Addition on March 31, 2017. Photos above show progression of construction.

Learning addition and telling the community their stories; administrators provided constant support, and the Vote Yes committee organized, raised funds, put up signs, canvassed, worked the polls, and changed minds. The referendum will accomplish the following without raising taxes due to the retirement of old bonds.

- Early learning addition and renovations at Palos West;
- Roof replacement at Palos East;
- Parking lot and driveway improvements at Palos West;
- Boiler and water heater replacements at Palos West and Palos South;
- Classroom and science lab renovations at Palos East, Palos West, and Palos South;
- Energy efficiency projects at Palos East, Palos West, and Palos South; and
- Soft playground surface replacement at Palos West.



District Finances

12 CONSECUTIVE YEARS WITH BALANCED BUDGET

Last fall the board passed a balanced operating budget for the 2016-2017 school year. This is the 12th year in a row the board has fulfilled its commitment to balanced budgets and operating within its means. Just as importantly, the district adhered to the budget and has not exceed budgeted operating expenses over that same period.

This year, the district's revenues lagged behind budget. This is concerning and is due to the continuing troubles at the state level. The district is due from the state over \$800,000 in funding for special education programs. These funds have been committed to the district through statute but not released. This revenue shortfall is painful for the district but fortunately, Palos 118 is not overly reliant on state revenues, with just 9% of revenues coming from the state, compared to the state average of 25%. Furthermore, the board has had the fore-

sight to build up appropriate cash reserve levels to insulate the district from cash flow problems in Springfield.

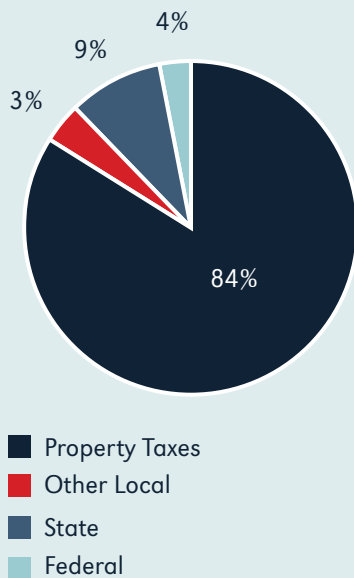
Palos 118 has always been a district primarily funded through local property taxes. We are proud to report that the district's tax rate will be decreasing for tax year 2016 (payable in 2018) compared to tax year 2015. Many factors contribute to the tax rate, but boiled down, this decrease means that real estate values for property owners within the district increased at a greater rate than the district's expenses.

One reason for this, under the board's direction the business office has focused on facility improvement projects that reduce operating expense. Energy spending makes up one of the largest expense categories and a major area of focus for reducing costs. Last summer the district installed

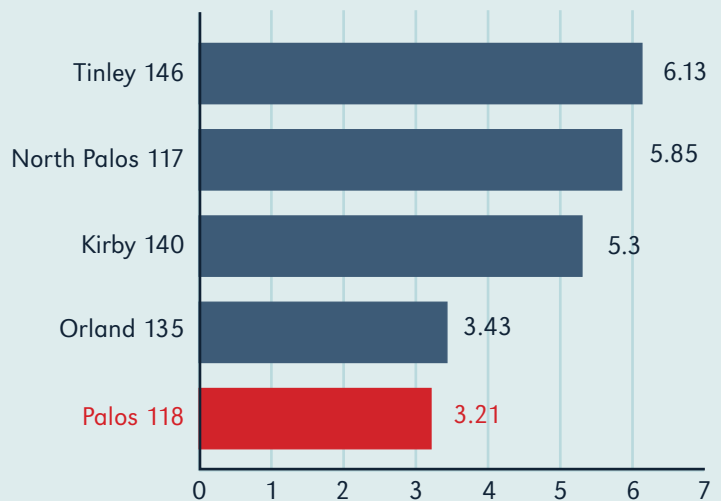
LED lighting, managed for peak demand and optimized existing HVAC systems. With the grants received through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, this project expected payback will be less than 2 years. In addition, this summer we will be installing small, low cost solar arrays at all three school buildings. These arrays will offset up to 5% of purchased energy and using conservative estimates will pay for themselves in 8-9 years.

One of the board's five goals is to "Manage and Plan for Financial Integrity." Palos 118 is reaching this goal by continuing to set and maintain balanced budgets, accumulate and protect appropriate cash reserves, and prudently invest in cost-saving measures that limit impact in the classroom. The outcome of this goal means that the community receives great schools at a great value.

District Revenues



2015 Tax Rates





Watch Capstone's Districts of Distinction highlight video



District 118 Capstone Program HONORED FOR INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE



Launched in 2015, Palos South's Capstone Program was designed under the premise, "If given the opportunity, kids can do amazing things." Each year, 8th grade students volunteer to research problems with local significance and develop solutions to

help improve our community. This form of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) connects education to the real world and promotes critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. In just two years of development, District Administration magazine is honoring the Palos South's Capstone Program with the Districts of Distinction Award.

Districts of Distinction is a national annual recognition program created by District Administration magazine to honor school districts that are leading the way with new and innovative ideas that work. The Capstone Program is being recognized for outstanding work with enhancing 21st century learning skills through projects designed around solving problems facing the Palos 118 community.

The Capstone Program affords students the opportunity to utilize the latest learning technologies while they collaborate with outside experts to create viable solutions to their identified problems. Students work in small teams to select and explore one of three predetermined areas of local or regional significance. This past school year, students who expressed an interest in working with environmental concerns undertook ways to stabilize the bee population in the mid-west region; students who expressed an interest in working on conservation discovered

ways to reduce the cost consumption at Palos South Middle School; and students who have a passion for economic development designed solutions to enhance the commercial area surrounding the Palos Park Train Station.

Student groups are led by teacher facilitators who support the learning process through the use of thought provoking questioning strategies, technology enhanced tools, and exploratory field trips.

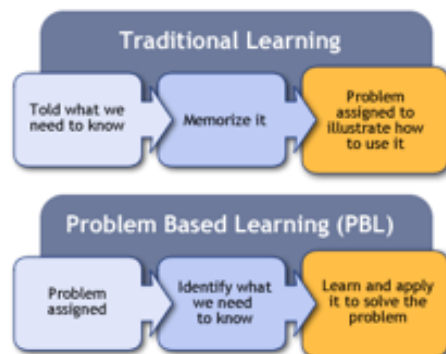
Assuming a 21st century teaching role, Capstone advisors serve as co-learners, co-planners, co-producers, and co-evaluators. At the conclusion of the program, each student team gave a formal presentation outlining its research and recommended solutions to a panel of judges. The top teams in each category participated in Palos South's Annual "Capstone Day" where they presented to a panel of experts in each field of study.

This year's overall winning team came from the environmental group. Karol Para, Matthew Sekula, and Dania Salem were awarded top prize for initiating a social media campaign to ensure a healthier environment for the local bee population. The group utilized Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram to educate others and promote their cause throughout the community. Their campaign yielded hundreds of followers and is still going strong.



Top: The Capstone Economic Group takes a field trip to LaGrange.

Bottom: Eighth graders Matt Sekula, Karol Para, and Dania Salem were the overall winning 2017 Capstone team from the environmental group researching the diminishing bee population.



Thanks to the efforts and support from the Palos 118 Educational Foundation, students work out of state-of-the-art collaborative learning studios simulating real world work environments. District 118 commends Mrs. Schramm, Mr. Mancilla, Ms. McDonough, and Mrs. Kmiecik for the success and growing popularity of the program.

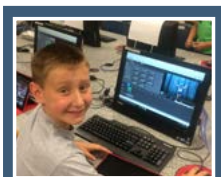
LEARNING & TECHNOLOGY IN PALOS 118

1:1 INITIATIVE

Palos South has successfully completed the first year of the 1:1 initiative. The vision of the 1:1 initiative is to expand learning beyond physical boundaries. The goal is to create collaborative learning environments, which blend traditional and digital resources for students to have authentic learning experiences. This learning model integrates online resources with face-to-face instruction by providing continuous access. Students were able to research, complete assignments or projects, and communicate, collaborate with their peers and teachers.

In order for this initiative to be successful, the district required all parents and students to attend an orientation session prior to receiving the device. In addition, teachers attended weekly meetings that focused on utilizing Schoology and integrating technology into their lessons.

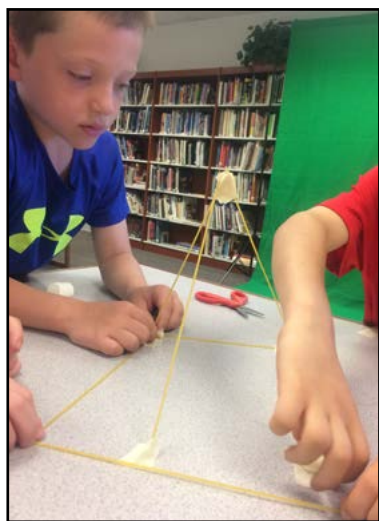
Our students are already skilled in technology, and they require immediate access to information. Students having devices will help them improve those technological skills they need for high school and beyond. Overall, the feedback from parents, students and teachers was very positive. We look forward to deploying devices to all 7th and 8th grade students for the upcoming school year.



Watch *Techno Quest Camp 2017* in action.



TECHNO QUEST CAMP



Each summer, over 80 students participate in a three-day tech camp. The two sessions consisted of students entering grades first through fourth or fifth through eighth. They rotated through various stations focusing on STEAM activities.

During the camp, the students worked on a number of different engineering challenges that focused on creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration to create solutions to the problems. They had the opportunity to explore our MakerSpace area where they were able to build and create. In addition, we had our first 3D printer station. The goal for the 3D printer group was to design and 3D print our own fidget spinners. Students used a program called 3D Builder to visualize, design and edit their spinner. The fourth station allowed students to create their own videos using the program WeVideo. Each student received an account to use for the entire summer. The students took pictures using a green screen or found pictures on the web to incorporate in their video. Lastly, students had a great time working

together to break the code during Breakout Edu. Students were given a scenario involving Mr. Mancilla. They worked through several clues to open the final box. It was amazing to see how quickly they worked together to find their solution.

The goal of the camp is to provide our students with engaging STEAM activities that require them to work collaboratively with others.

YOUNG INVENTORS CHALLENGE



Three pairs of students from Palos East and West Schools won major awards in several categories at the annual Chicago Toy and Game Fair's Young Inventor Challenge this past November. The event provides an opportunity for children to showcase their own original toy & game inventions to toy & game industry professionals, members of media, and the general public. Pictured are Palos East fourth graders Olivia Wasilewski and Brynna Siewers, grand prize winners for their game Ship of Treasures, a pirate strategy game where players must find their opponents' treasure while avoiding cannonballs. Among the many featured prizes for the Grand Prize winners is a trip to New York City, a toy and game development mentorship

with Pressman Toy and Target, and a chance to have their winning game in Target stores throughout the country. Olivia and Brynna are already working with the Pressman and Target to get their game on store shelves.

The process was a positive one for both students. Brynna says the most difficult challenge was "to create a game that was both strategy and luck driven and finding a theme that would appeal to both boys and girls of all ages."

"You can always ask and get help from someone," said Olivia. Both students were thankful for everyone who helped them with their game, including their ALPS teacher Mrs. McNamara.

Other winners were Bella Narciso and Johnny Pempek, Runners-Up in the junior category for their game Seastack; and Madeleine Niemiec and Evelyn Dalton, People's Choice Award for their game Creativity Glue.

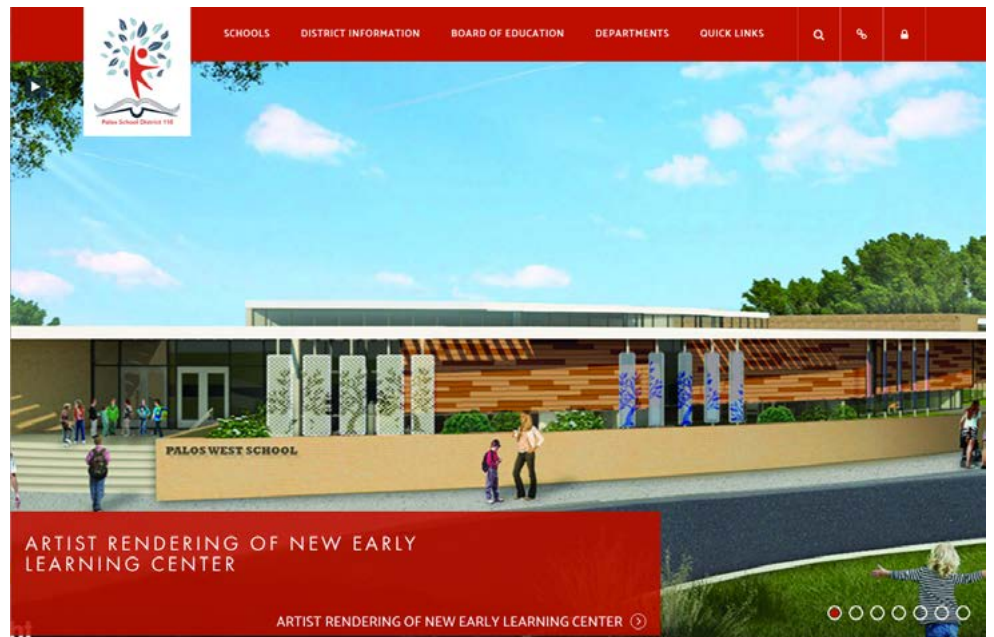


www.palos118.org

We are also pleased to introduce our new district logo pictured at left. It reflects our district's vision of "All Students Reaching Their Full Potential."

INTRODUCING THE NEW PALOS 118 WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA ENDEAVORS

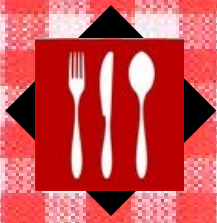
We invite you to visit our newly redesigned website that is both user and mobile friendly. This allows easy access to district, school, and classroom information.



Stay connected on Facebook at **Palos School District 118**



Follow us on Twitter **@Palos_118**



Palos 118 Back to School Family Picnic

Monday, August 21, 2017

Palos South Middle School

5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Bring your picnic blanket and chairs, and come join us as we celebrate the students, teachers, and families of our district and community.

Everyone is welcome!

Complimentary slushies and popcorn, games and contests, entertainment, face painting, District 118 Band, D.J., inflatable fun slides, and balloon animals.

Variety of food available for purchase including hotdogs, pizza, szechuan/mandarin selections, ice cream, roasted corn, and more!

Parking and shuttle buses available at St. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Church, 8410 131st St., Palos Park.

Carpooling is strongly recommended.

Palos 118 thanks all of our vendors for their support. The district has no affiliation with any of the picnic vendors.

Email yleschkies@palos118.org to volunteer!

